

Report

of the Assumption Province (1959)

The Assumption Province is one of the « babies » of the Congregation, having been in existence only since August 1956. This brief report, therefore covers a period of a little more than two years.

I. - PERSONNEL

On August 22, 1956, the Very Rev. Father General erected the Assumption Province, which was formerly a part of St. Mary's Province. At the time of erection there were forty-two Fathers, five scholastic Fathers, five Scholastics and seven Novices. On December 31, 1958, our numbers stood at 48 Fathers, 3 Scholastic Fathers, 10 Scholastics and lay Brothers. Two of our Fathers are of Slovak descent, all others are of Polish origin. Last year Father A. SYLLA celebrated his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood, at the age of 77. Rev. R. KOSIAN, God willing will celebrate his Golden Jubilee in two years. Thus two of our Fathers are over seventy, two over sixty, eleven in the early fifties, and the majority in the middle forties with only seven below thirty. There is a gap of some twelve years without any new recruits being added to the ranks. This may pose a problem in the future.

II. - MINISTRY

The principle work of our Province is ministering to the spiritual needs of Immigrants of Polish descent. Since World War II, over 35,000 Poles have entered Canada, settling in the various parts of the nation, with over half stopping in the Province of Ontario, and with the majority settling in and around Toronto and the Niagara Peninsula. This influx of new Immigrants created a great demand for spiritual ministration. The New Arrivals found the period of adjustment and slow integration a most trying and frequently a heartbreaking experience. The Parish Church and Rectory became the chief source of information and guidance for their spiritual as well as their temporal requirements. The Parish became the refuge, the oasis, in this strange land where people spoke a strange language and lived by different standards and customs. True to the Oblate motto, « to preach the Gospel to the poor », some ten Oblates, from France and England, followed their compatriots to this new land, where they could help take care of their spiritual needs.

Today the work of our Fathers is spread all the way from Toronto to Vancouver, with half the Fathers however, in the Province of Ontario. The following résumé will present a picture of the vastness of our territory. We have 4 parishes in the Archdiocese of Toronto, 3 in St. Catharines, 1 in Ottawa; 1 Parish and Mission in Timmins; 3 parishes and 7 mission churches in the Archdiocese of Winnipeg; 3 parishes and 5 mission churches in St. Boniface; 7 Parishes and 13 Mission churches in the Archdiocese of Regina; 1 Parish in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. All city Parishes, especially those of Winnipeg and Toronto have been steadily growing in numbers. Until the Fall of this year, they were badly understaffed, but thanks be to

God, the personnel now is adequate, with four Fathers in two parishes in Toronto and the one in Winnipeg. The two parishes in Toronto are presenting a major problem, as the churches are inadequate to accomodate the faithful, on the other hand it is difficult to built another church as the Poles have not settled in any particular section of the city, but are to be found everywhere. The Archdiocese of Toronto has become one of the great cosmopolitan centres in Canada with every sixth person a New Canadian. The total population of Poles in Canada is over 215,000.

Districts

The Province has been organized into four Houses, 5 Residences and 16 Stations. The Residences and Stations are attached to the various Houses, thus forming a District. Thirteen Fathers live in isolated Stations and two are some three hundred miles away from their Superiors. It is hoped and planned that as our personnel increases fewer Fathers will be compelled to live in isolated posts, but for the time being this cannot be avoided.

III. - RELIGIOUS LIFE

With the erection of the Province the Fathers are giving concrete evidence of the realization that a tremendous responsibility has been placed upon their shoulders; that the future growth and development of the works of the Province are not the responsibility of the Provincial alone, but the duty of every Father in the Province.

Furthermore, the conviction that the expansion of the Province is dependent entirely upon the spiritual health of each member is clearly evident. The truth, « that the Holy Rule is the source of our Perfection », is the maxim according

to which the Fathers are seriously striving to abide by, often under very difficult and trying conditions. The material sacrifices that the Fathers have made on behalf of the Province are most gratifying and encouraging. The Fathers appear to realize that they are the Founders, the Pioneers of the New Province, and that greater sacrifices have to be made in order to lay down solid foundations for the future growth of the Province. They realize that this spirit and tradition that will be implemented now, is the one that future generations will draw on. The determination, the desire, the will to succeed is there, what the future will bring is in the hands of Almighty God.

IV. - HOUSE OF STUDIES

The House of Studies was established in Toronto in 1947, when a large dwelling was purchased, which served as a small Juniorate. The Juniors attended St Michael's High School, under the direction of the Basilian Fathers. In 1955 a four acre site was acquired in the suburbs of Toronto, adjoining the property on which Michael Power High School, under the direction of the Basilian Fathers, was to be erected in 1956-57. With the proceeds of the sale of the former Juniorate, St Mary's Province began erecting in June 1956, a new Juniorate, large enough to accommodate 25 to 30 boys. At the time of the erection of the Province this new House of Studies, which became our property, was already under roof. It was completed in late spring of 1957, and occupied immediately thereafter. Michael POWER High School opened in the Fall of 1957, with only grade nine, thus our Juniors had to be pretty well limited to the same grade. Each year a grade is being added, thus it will take several years until we are able to prepare students for the Novitiate in this institution.

In the Fall of 1958 one of our young Fathers joined the staff of Michael Power High School. This we feel is a great advantage to us, as this Father will be on the inside track in the operation of the school and at the same time he will have an eye on our Juniors. Furthermore, an Oblate Cross in the classroom and on the Campus should go a long way in fostering vocations, not only for our Province, but for the Oblates in general. The Basilian Fathers have been most kind and cooperative and we feel that this arrangement which is to the mutual advantage of the Basilians and the Oblates will bear fruit in due course.

In the meantime our main source of recruitment must be the Catholic High Schools and the individual contacts of the Fathers engaged in parochial work. During the past year a considerable amount of time has been devoted, during the monthly conference, to the study of the problem of Vocations. The one glaring problem in the Toronto area is the lack of Catholic High School accommodation. Only a very small percentage of boys from our parishes are able to gain admission to a Catholic High School. Due to the lack of personnel we have not been able as yet to assign one Father for this work exclusively, but we hope to fill this void within the next six months.

Workshops

In 1957 the First Workshop Week ever held in Canada was conducted in the House of Studies, under the expert guidance of Rev. Father MUNIE, O.M.I. from the Central American Province. It was from this workshop week that some of the boys registered for grade nine that same Fall. The same program was again repeated in 1958 with commendable success. This year plans have been made for a two week workshop in 1959.

V. - MISSIONS

Provincial Mission House

During the first two years of the existence of the Province, the Provincial continued in the capacity of Parish Priest and Provincial. This situation was necessitated, due to the lack of personnel and lack of accommodation. In the spring of 1958, with an eye on the six graduates from the Pastoral Year, a new property was acquired in the city of Toronto, which was to serve as a Provincial House and residence for the Mission Band. This new dwelling, which contains some 15 rooms, is located in the western end of the city, in a quiet residential area and is very well suited for the purpose intended. It was occupied in September of 1958.

Mission Band

One of the first objectives of the Provincial Administration was to organize a Mission Band, in order to fulfill the primary end of our Congregation, and thus answering a great need in Canada. Immediately after the first six months one of the Fathers was appointed to this work and today we are happy to report that we have three Fathers exclusively engaged in this work and one other on call as the need arises. Without any special propaganda, during 1958 our Mission Band conducted 28 weeks of retreats, plus Holy Week help, Christmas help, and about 4 months of replacements. The demand for Parish Missions, 17 Forty Hour Devotions, six bi-lingual Missions, both in Canada and across the border, is very great indeed. In Canada, we are the only Congregation that is in a position to do this work, with the exception of one Polish Father in the Redemptorist order. The field of labor is there; all we require is personnel.

VI - POLISH DISTRICT IN FRANCE

We are in very close contact with the Polish District in France. They have supplied our Province with a number of vocations. We in turn are doing our utmost to help them financially. During the past year Father V.M. MENDRELLA from the district, came to Canada and joined our Mission Band and has been busily engaged in the preaching of Missions and retreats throughout the country. The offerings received were earmarked for the District. The help so far has been substantial and we only hope and pray that we may be able to render this help in the future.

VII. - POLAND

Since the bloodless revolution of Oct. 1956, the borders of Poland have been opened. Now for the first time in over twenty years, the Fathers are able to obtain visas and visit their parents and relatives. So far seven Fathers have already visited the land of their birth and others are preparing to leave in the near future. This has been, and continues to be, a financial strain on the Province, but a strain that is being gladly borne, for these trips have provided a great joy and consolation to the Fathers as well as to their relatives.

VIII. - NOVITIATE, SCHOLASTICATE

As yet we have no novitiate of our own. Our Novices are being sent to the Novitiate at St. Norbert, Manitoba, where they mingle with the Novices of Manitoba, Alberta, and St. Mary's Province. This common Novitiate has proved to be most satisfactory in inculcating the true Oblate Family spirit among the novices, under the capable guidance of the Novice Master.

Our Scholastics continue to remain in St. Charles Scholasticate, Battleford, in St. Mary's Province. The scholasticate is not a modern up-to-date build-

ing, but it has been noted for the fine spirit that permeates the entire community. True Oblate charity is its characteristic note and we feel very well satisfied with the training that the scholastics receive. There is one Polish Father on the staff, who is always available to our scholastics if the need arises.

IX. - ASSOCIATION OF MARY IMMACULATE

The Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate has been established in the Province, but not as ideally as we would like it to be. We have at present about 500 members on the active list. Regular quarterly bulletins are being sent out to members in order to keep up their interest. « Oblate Circles » have likewise been established in several centres, whose members recite daily prayers for vocations and contribute towards the education of boys for the Priesthood. This field offers tremendous possibilities and slowly but surely these possibilities are being exploited. Due to lack of personnel, no Father as yet has been appointed to take charge of this work exclusively, but it is sincerely hoped that this situation will soon be remedied.

X. - BUILDING PROJECTS

It may be of interest to mention a word about some of our building projects, which have been in progress during the past two years. St. Hyacinth's Church, Ottawa, has been almost completed. The interior of St. Casimir's Church, Vancouver, has been renovated. St. Casimir's, Toronto, has installed new altars, and ten stained glass windows one of which depicts Our Founder kneeling at the feet of our Immaculate Mother. Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, St. Catharine's is now nearing completion after using the basement for five years. A new Separate school has been erected

at St. Hedwig's Parish, Oshawa, as well as a small two room school at Fenwick, Ont. The greatest single effort was the Parochial School of 8 rooms and a gymnasium at Holy Ghost Parish, Winnipeg. A new rectory is nearing completion at St. Mary's Parish, Toronto. In the planning stage we have the completion of St. Hedwig's Church Oshawa, and a Parish Auditorium and Rectory at St. Peter's & Paul's Parish, Welland.

XI. - CONCLUSION

After two years, the aims and problems confronting the Province are being seen in a clear perspective. We realize the task that lies before us, but the solution of various problems is dependent upon the solving of the greatest of all .. *Recruitment*. As soon as possible, our first step will be the appointment of a Vocational Director. Next we shall continue preparing young Fathers who may be able to join the staff of existing Catholic High Schools. Furthermore, we hope that in not too distant future, perhaps another House of Studies will be established in Western Canada. There is a marked difference between the High School curriculum in Ontario and Western Canada. A Western House of Studies would solve this problem.

Once sufficient personnel is available to assume the various duties essential for the growth of the Province, we can look with confidence to the future. For the next few years it is going to be an uphill struggle, however, we place our complete faith and trust in Our Lady of the Assumption, Queen of Poland, trusting that under Her Maternal Guidance, we shall grow and become fitting instruments in the Hands of Her Divine Son, for the Glory of God, the salvation of souls, and the honor of the Congregation.

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Provincial